

Interactionists are concerned with the ways in which people interact on a small scale. They draw attention to the way people tend to label other people very quickly after meeting them. Consider the two people below.



Think of five words or phrases that describe each of these people



The words or phrases you've thought of are your "labels" – the ways you think about these people. These labels are based on their appearance and dress and are made without really knowing anything about them.

Labelling theory argues that people in authority such as teachers make judgements on pupils and may label them, at least at first, based on their appearance and dress, how they speak and their attitude. Policemen may also label people on how they look and speak. This may go on to have important consequences for how they treat these people and also on the future actions of those they label.



Consider these two groups of young people.

1. How might a policeman label them?
2. How might this affect how the policeman might treat them?
3. Could this affect how the two groups react to the policeman?